

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-10 MC-01 ACDA-10 OMB-01 L-02

PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSC-10 NSCE-00

PRS-01 AID-10 DRC-01 NEAE-00 /081 W

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P R 201250Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4978

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO USMTM DHAHRAN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

DIA WASHDC

CSAF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T JIDDA 4075

LIMDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR CAIRO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH AIRCRAFT SALES TO SAG

REF: PARIS 24681 (NOTAL); SECDEF 182059Z SEP 73 (NOTAL)

1. BOTH PARIS REFTEL AND WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE
QUOTED SECDEF'S REF B, INDICATE THAT GOF AND SAG ACTIVELY
DISCUSSING SAUDI PURCHASE OF MIRAGE III. WITH REGARD TO
SECDEF'S QUERY STATUS THESE NEGOTIATIONS,
EMBASSY HAS ALSO RECEIVED REPORT THROUGH RELIABLE AND
SENSITIVE SOURCE THAT NEGOTIATIONS IN TRAIN BUT HAVE
NOT YET BEEN CONCLUDED.

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2. IT IS EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT IF SAG CONCLUDES MIRAGE III PURCHASE, THAT THESE AIRCRAFT WOULD NOT BECOME INTEGRATED OR ORGANIC TO ROYAL SAUDI AIR FORCE (RSAF) BECAUSE OF SAUDI MANPOWER PROBLEMS AND CONCURRENT PLANS FOR RSAF EXPANSION. SAUDIS ARE KNOWN TO BE HAPPY WITH F-5 PEACE HAWK PROGRAM; F-4 TALKS STILL PROCEEDING AT TECHNICAL LEVEL, AND MIRAGE III IS NOT, IN ANY CASE, FUNCTIONAL ALTERNATIVE TO F-4. FOR THESE REASONS, ONE MAY SPECULATE THAT IF MIRAGE III PURCHASE IS CONCLUDED, AIRCRAFT MIGHT BE STATIONED IN SAUDI ARABIA FOR IN-COUNTRY TRAINING OF THIRD PARTY SUCH AS EGYPT. SUPPORT FACILITIES MIGHT BE PROVIDED BY CONTRACTOR, AND THUS HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON SAUDI MANPOWER PICTURE. BY SUCH A DEAL, SAUDIS WOULD SEEM TO REWARD GOF FOR ITS EVENHANDED POLICY TOWARD AREA, AND KEEP FRENCH MOD GALLEY (WHO COMPLETED FIVE-DAY VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA SEPT 16) FROM RETURNING EMPTY-HANDED. SAUDI-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS COULD ALSO RECEIVE A BOOST.

3. AT SAME TIME, WE KNOW THAT GOF HAS BEEN INTERESTED IN PROMOTING SALE OF F-1 TO SAG--AN AIRCRAFT WHOSE OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLE F-4 PHANTOM. RSAF TEAM HAS IN FACT INSPECTED AND TEST-FLOWN F-1 AND WHILE IMPRESSED WITH ITS PERFORMANCE, WE ARE TOLD RECOMMENDED AGAINST SAG PURCHASE BECAUSE OF UNACCEPTABLE FRENCH "AFTER PURCHASE" SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS.

4. IT HAS BEEN EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION IN DISCUSSION OF SAUDI AIR FORCE DEVELOPMENT WITH RESPONSIBLE SAG OFFICIALS THAT LATTER ARE AWARE OF THE MANY ADVANTAGES OF CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT UNDER US AUSPICES. TYEPTO AOCHROTSR BOUTEILLER MOREOVER, WHEN ASKED BY AMBASSADOR THACHER SEPT 18 IF SALE OF F-1'S TO SAUDIA ARABIA HAD BEEN AGREED UPON, LATTER MERELY REPLIED THAT NO AIRCRAFT SALES AGREEMENT HAD BEEN CONCLUDED BUT THAT DISCUSSIONS ARE CONTINUING.

5. ABOVE COORDINATED WITH USMT.
HORAN

NOTE BY OC/T: JIDDA 4075 NOT PASSED TO CAIRO.
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